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TERMS IN ADVANCE
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No. 459



"Ha! ha! ha! Helen Brainard, two can play at the game of revenge, as you shall know."

Merle, the Mutineer;

OR,
THE BRAND OF THE RED ANCHOR.

A Romance of Sunny Lands and
Blue Waters.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAM,
AUTHOR OF "WITHOUT A HEART," "THE SURE
ANGEL," "THE CORSAIRS OF HISTORY,"
"THE FLYING YANKEE," "THE CRE-
TAN ROVER," "THE PIRATE
PRINCE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVALS.

SEVERAL weeks after the arrival of Lance Grenville, who was generally called by his infermates, Helen Brainard sat in her own room alone, and in deep and painful meditation, for she had confessed to her own heart, that she loved the brother of the man to whom she was engaged.

Since his return home, Lance had settled down to a quiet plantation life, and resumed the charge of the Grenville estates. He seemed no longer the restless wanderer, and his mother believed, now, that she would keep him ever near her while she lived.

As she sat thus in her room, in deep thought, Helen reviewed her meetings with Lance since his coming, and she felt that her love for him was returned, though no word of his had ever given her cause to feel that he cared for her, other than as a potential bride of his brother; still she redid his heart, as often a woman can, when she is the one adored.

Pretended at the mistake she had made, in confessing her love for Arthur, with an impatient gesture Helen Brainard arose, and leaving her room, went out for a walk in the lonely grounds, for she needed action to keep off her painful reveries.

Mechanically she sought the path leading to the rustic arbor on the cliff, and threw herself down in a wicker chair, to gaze out over the sea.

"A rosebud for your thoughts, Miss Helen."

The maiden started at the voice, and beheld before her a young man, elegantly dressed, and with a face that would have been very handsome, had it not been marred by dissipation and recklessness.

In his hand he held a red rosebud, which he offered her in payment for the thoughts he had asked to know.

Before coming to her present home, Helen had met in New Orleans, Rosal Abercrombie, who then stood before her.

He had come of good family, but at the death of his father, some years before, he had inherited a large estate, which his wild extravagance soon swamped in debt, and from him, Comodore Brainard had purchased the elegant home in which he then lived.

With no mother's influence to guide his early years, for Mrs. Abercrombie had died when her boy was an infant, and reared by his father, a man wholly governed by her, it was no wonder that Rosal became wild, recklessly extravagant, and willful, and threw away his inheritance within the thought of the future.

He was all at once good, and he was forced to sell his plantation home to pay his debts. Rosal Abercrombie met Helen Brainard, and from the first meeting loved her, and swore she should become his wife.

Admiring him much, the maiden had at first seemed to favor his suit; but, after her father had purchased of the dissolute youth his home, and she had met Arthur Grenville, she no longer cared for Rosal, who, to do him justice, had given up his wild life, and upon the wreck of his fortune was living quietly in the village near his former abode.

Though he knew that the maiden was the promised wife of Arthur Grenville, Rosal Aber-

crombie did not despair of yet winning her, and was wont to often ride over to Landhaven, as the commodore had named his place, to see the object of his love.

"My thoughts were not of interest to you, Mr. Abercrombie; but be seated; I am glad you have come to drive them away, for they were not of the pleasantest," said Helen, quietly.

"Would that I could ever drive from you that which was unpleasant to you, Helen," remarked the young man, earnestly.

"Mr. Abercrombie, is this generous, is it honorable in you, when you know I am engaged to another?"

"Bah! engaged to one man and loving another," sneered the young profligate.

"What mean you, sir? If you intend to insult me, my father shall know of your impertinence," and Helen arose to her feet, an angry flush upon her cheeks.

"Helen Brainard, sit down! I wish to talk with you, Nay, do not exhibit anger, for though becoming in a great degree, it is yet out of place with one who loves you as I do, and who would make you his wife."

"So you have often said, and as often have given my answer: I do not love you, Mr. Abercrombie."

"Still I would have you marry me, Helen."

"Yes, you would use me as a stepping-stone to get back your old home, which you threw away by extravagance."

"Parion me, Helen, for having been an eavesdropper—I was strolling along the beach, shooting water-fowl, became fatigued and came here to rest, expecting to disturb no one."

"I dropped off to sleep, lulled by the wash of the waves, and your voices in conversation awakened me, and I would have made my presence known had I not heard that which caused me to remain quiet, for I cared not that Rosal Abercrombie should know I was present. Am I pardoned for eavesdropping?"

"Yes; but oh! what have you not heard?" groaned the unhappy girl.

"I have heard that which would make me extremely happy, were my joy not purchased with my brother's misery."

"Did Rosal Abercrombie speak the truth, Helen, when he said you cared for me more than for Arthur?"

"He did."

"You confess it?"

"With humiliation, yes."

"It is not humiliating to confess one's love, Helen, for I tell you that I love you with my whole heart, now that the secret is no longer my own."

Helen gave a half-cry, as if of joy, of sorrow, and alarm mingled.

Before her stood the noble man, who had just confessed his love for her.

He drew not nearer to her; his rifle he had leaned against the door, and his arms were folded upon his broad breast.

For a moment a deep and painful silence followed his words.

The Lance Grenville continued slowly and in his strangely soft tones:

"It is a great joy, Helen, to know that you love me, and yet it is a sorrow unspeakable, for it comes from the lips of one who is betrothed to one dearer to me than all other men—my brother Arthur."

"For me you feel but a passing fancy, a fascination that will fade away as soon as I am gone from here, and your noble breast will go back to its first allegiance, and you will wonder how it could have strayed into forbidden fields."

"But, once again, ere I leave you, Helen, let my ears drink in the sweet words, and my heart clasp close this phantom love; tell me you love me, and if it were not for Arthur, that you would be my wife."

"I love you, Lance Grenville," passionately said the maiden, advancing toward him.

"But he held her off, and said in a low voice:

"No; your lips are sacred to him. If my brother were to die I would claim you then, but not while he lives."

"You have heard me, Helen; in a week I will come for my answer."

after the death of Colonel Darrington by his hand, and the suicide of poor Lucille.

"Mother!"

"Well, Launcelot?" and Mrs. Grenville was almost frightened at the tone of her son's voice.

"It is useless trying; I cannot remain here; I will leave home once more."

"Not soon, I trust, Launcelot?" said the mother, her heart sinking with dread.

"Yes, to-morrow; ay, to-night—within the hour," announced, emphatically.

"And where would you go, my son?"

"To where everywhere! back to Mexico, and again take command of a cruiser."

"Does not David sail to-night for New Orleans with marketing?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then I shall go with him; I will at once pack my trunk, so please send word not to let the lugger sail without me."

"But you will miss seeing Arthur?" said Mrs. Grenville, trying by some *ruse* to detain him if she could.

"He went over to Landhaven, I suppose?"

"Yes, Lance."

"Then he will not return until late; bid him good-by for me," and the unhappy man left the tea-room.

In an hour's time he returned, dressed for traveling, and accompanied by a negro servant bearing his trunk.

Sorrowing for her son, whom she believed was flying from the cruel memories that haunted him when at home, Mrs. Grenville bade him farewell with many tears, and entreaties not to remain long away from her.

"I am getting old fast, Lance; see, my hair is white now, and ere long you will have no mother."

"The sorrows I have had, have left their impress here," and she laid her hand upon her heart.

"If you remain away long, my son, you will find no welcome for me upon your return, for I will be sleeping yonder," and she pointed to a grove of trees at the other end of the garden, where, for generations, the Grenvilles had been laid in their last resting-place.

"If I die, mother, I shall never return home; you are the only anchor that I have to hold me here," and he drew his mother toward him, imprinted a kiss upon the silver hair and was gone.

With quick, heavy step he walked down toward the landing, a few hundred yards distant, followed by the servant bearing his traps.

At a small pier lay a lugger, a plantation trading-boat, the sails up, and the negro crew, of three men, awaiting his coming.

"Dave! I am to be your passenger to New Orleans."

"So missis sent word, massa, an' I has had the cabin fixt up as nice as possible," said the black skipper, politely, then he added: "I see sorry to see you goin' away so soon, sah."

"I must go, Dave; but I will remain on deck, on a blanket, if I care to sleep, for the night is too beautiful to go into the cabin," and Lance Grenville glanced out over the moonlit waters, for a full moon rode in the cloudless heavens.

"Are you ready now, Dave?"

"Yes, sah; if you is, massa."

"Then cast off, for I am most anxious to be away," impatiently said Lance Grenville, and the lugger was slowly swung round to catch the breeze.

"I hold on there with that craft! put back to the wheel, or I will fire on you!"

The words were loud and determined, and issued from the lips of a horseman, who dashed down to the pier, followed by a score of companions, also mounted.

"Put back, Dave; you have not been stealing, I hope," said Lance Grenville, calmly.

"No, sah; but dat am de new sheriff, sah, sartin."

In another moment the lugger was again alongside the pier, and Lance Grenville sprang ashore, and asked, sternly:

"Of what has my servant been guilty, gentlemen that you come after him, mounted and armed?"

"It is not your servant we are after, Captain Grenville, but yourself," answered sheriff Winslow, laying his hand upon the arm of the young master.

"Indeed! of what am I accused?" sneeringly demanded Lance Grenville.

"You are guilty of as base a crime as—"

The man said no more, for a blow, fair in the face, laid him his length upon the ground.

"Hold! Lance Grenville, you cannot escape," and a dozen pistols were leveled upon him.

"I seek not to escape; I but punished one who said I was guilty of a base crime; of what am I accused?"

He turned haughtily upon those who confronted him.

Then one dismounted and stepped toward him; it was Rosal Abercrombie.

"Lance, my poor friend, the charge against you is a severe one, and I trust it can be proven false."

"Name it, sir."

"Murder!"

"Murder! Who have I murdered?" and Lance spoke half-earnestly, half-laughingly.

"Your brother, Arthur!"

As the last name issued from the lips of Rosal Abercrombie, the hand of Launcelot Grenville was upon his throat, and he was hurled back with a shock that nearly stunned him.

"Liar! wretch! you dare make that charge against me!"

"It is a severe charge, Captain Grenville, and it remains with you to prove it untrue," said an old planter, coming forward.

"Arthur, my brother Arthur dead?"

"He is."

"Who killed him?"

"You are accused of his murder."

"I why should I kill poor Arthur?"

"Captain Grenville," and the sheriff approached, cautiously: "Captain Grenville, I am very sorry, sir, but it is my duty, sir, to arrest you upon the charge of murder, and I must iron you, as already we know how violent you can be."

The head of the proud man dropped on his breast, and a deep groan broke from his lips, as he stood a moment in silence.

Then he said, calmly, facing his accusers, and holding his wrists together:

"Do your duty, sir."

The manacles were clasped upon his wrists, and the party set off for the mansion.

As they ascended the broad steps of the piazza anon a heavy blow fell upon the prisoner—sorrow almost greater than he could bear.

At the door a servant met him, and from his lips broke the words:

"Massa Lance, your poor mother am dead."

"Dead! my mother dead, too?"

He spoke like one in his sleep.

"Yes, sah; when de gummans comed an' tolle her how you had kill Massa Art'ur, den she lay down on de sofa an' die," said the old negro, the factotum of the Grenville mansion, when his young masters were little boys.

With a groan from his inmost heart, Launce- lot Grenville sunk down in a chair, and buried his face in his manacled hands.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE COMPACT.

"I HAVE come for my answer, Helen."

Helen Brainard sat alone in the sea-view arbor on the cliff, and her eyes were looking fixedly out over the sunlit waters of the Gulf, though they apparently saw nothing, as she seemed lost in bitter thought.

Her face was blanched, her eyes deep-sunken, and her spirit looked out upon that she had suffered, in the week that had passed, since she last sat in that arbor, and was left there in a deep faint by Arthur Grenville.

Like a lightning stroke, the news had come upon her, that Arthur Grenville was dead, and that his brother was his murderer!

For days he had lain in a kind of demi-s stupor, conscious, yet uttering no word; but at last she had left her room, and to her father's delight, had joined him at breakfast that very morning, a week from the day of the murder.

As though determined to shut out the past, she had closed her eyes, and lay quiet, for a long time; then she sat down to the piano and idly ran her fingers over the keys; but the air she started, drifted off into a dirge, and seizing her unfish-ed eye, she walked out toward the arbor.

But not to read, for bitter memories thronged upon her, and her face soon became as cold as marble; but in her eyes dwelt a strange light.

"I have come for my answer, Helen."

The maiden did not start; she knew who ad-dressed her, and so said quietly:

"I am glad you have come, Mr. Abercrombie; I wish to talk with you."

A bright look crossed the man's face, and enter-ing the arbor he seated himself upon a settee.

"From my heart I pity you, Helen."

"Do you?" was the calm reply.

"Indeed I do; it came so soon, so unexpected- edly upon you."

"You are without a rival now?"

It was half-assertion, half a question, and there was a sneer in her tone.

"Yes; one dead, and one in prison and as well as doomed—this is why I came to beg you to let me have the right to comfort you in your sorrow."

"The world need not know; only give me the promise that you will become my wife. I told you I would return in one week, and, though I knew your sorrow was overwhelming, I have come."

The man pleaded earnestly, and his voice trembled.

After a silence of a moment, Helen said:

"I am glad you have come, for I would learn from you all about that cruel murder."

"From me! Why, did not your father tell you all?" asked Rosal, in surprise.

"He told me that Arthur Grenville had fallen by the hand of his brother; that was all I then cared to know. Now I will hear all from you."

"I will make known all that I can tell of the sad affair, Helen, in which, unfortunately, I was forced to take a too conspicuous part."

"You?" and the eyes turned earnestly upon his face.

"Yes; the word first came to me of the mur- der."

"I am listening," as Rosal Abercrombie paused.

"Well, you will look you here, the other afternoon, and I rode down the beach to the cabin of old Beal, the fisherman, intending to engage him and his craft for a day's sport."

"I did not find Beal at home, and on return-ing met him, just after dark, a mile from here, at the White Cliff, and he held in his hand a dark object, which he informed me was a coat."

"I took it, and by the bright moonlight rec-ognized it as the coat worn by Arthur Grenville. He had learned that a terrible tragedy had taken place."

"He was off shore fishing in his small boat, and at sunset saw a horseman ride out upon the cliff, and he recognized Arthur Grenville, who seemed to be gazing seaward, as though in search of a sail.

"A moment, he said, that Arthur remained there, and then he saw him fall from his horse, and the report of a rifle reached his ears.

"He was so surprised at what he beheld that he remained motionless, and then, by the light of the rising moon, he saw a tall form run out upon the cliff, from the same thicket, and bend over the body of Arthur Grenville, for such I recognized to be."

"From his description of the murderer, 'a very tall man, riding a white horse,' I felt that it must be Lance Grenville, for you know I had dreaded trouble."

"Yes, your forebodings were quickly realized. What did you then do, Rosal?"

There was a strange calmness in the manner and tone of the woman, and Rosal Abercrombie doubted if she had loved Arthur Grenville as well as he had believed, or his brother at all.

"I felt it duty to cause the arrest of Lance Grenville, and I told the sheriff, while Beal was after several of the plotters, and we met at the residence of the Grenvilles, and, to add to our suspicions, learned that Lance had just left home for an indefinite period, going by the market lugger to New Orleans.

"While several of the party remained at the mansion, to acquaint the poor mother with the sad tidings, we dashed down to the pier, and captured the murderer, but not until he had knocked the sheriff down, and roughly handled me."

"Poor Mrs. Grenville! How terrible must have been her sorrow!"

"Her sorrows were soon at an end; she died from the shock, as you know she had heart-disease."

Helen Brainard started, and her form trembled violently, for she had dearly loved the noble old lady to whose son she had been betrothed.

After a long silence, which Rosal Abercrombie would not interrupt, Helen asked:

"And Launcelot Grenville is in prison now?"

"He is in the village jail, doubly ironed."

"In two weeks."

"There is no proof that Lance Grenville is the murderer."

"Yes, he was seen by Beal, and—"

"How far off was Beal?"

"Well, say two hundred yards from the shore."

"Did he say that it was Lance Grenville did the deed?"

"What a Yankee you are, for questions, Helen! He said it was a very large man, and after he rode away on a white horse, after throwing the body into the sea."

"The body was never found, was it?"

"No; it drifted out with the tide, and the

beach, for miles, has been searched in vain for it."

"The description of the murderer answers to Lance Grenville, certainly; still it may not have been, and a court will ask many questions before he is condemned on this evidence."

"You need offer no excuse for the man you left, Helen, for—"

"Silence! I tell you that better evidence must be found to hang Lance Grenville, and, Rosal Abercrombie, you must find it!"

"Great God!"

The man was on his feet in an instant; but the maiden was perfectly serene, a strange smile upon her lips, a stranger look in her eyes.

"In God's name what do you mean, Helen Brainard?"

"Just what I say, sir; you must find evidence that will hang Lance Grenville for the murder of his brother Arthur."

"I thought so, too; it was a fascination, an infatuation."

"And Arthur Grenville?"

"Was it my first, last and only love."

The maiden spoke with painful earnestness, and looked the man before her squarely in the face.

"You have just found out?"

"Yes, when he is dead, and his brother is his murderer."

"And you wish now to have Lance Grenville?"

"Hung."

The eyes fairly blazed now, and the lips were bloodless; the man was fairly frightened.

"Rosal Abercrombie, I hate Lance Grenville as fervently as I loved my brother, and I am re-vengeful, and he must die, and you must supply the evidence necessary to condemn him."

"I know not how."

"I will show you. Go into that arbor, look behind the door, and then tell me what you dis-cover."

The man quietly obeyed, and returning, said in wonder:

"Is it Lance Grenville's rifle?"

"Yes; he left it here one week ago to-day—"

"How?"

"See if it is loaded."

"It is not," said Rosal, after an examination.

"It was fired last a week ago, then; cannot an expert tell by examination if a firearm has just been discharged, or?"

"Yes, I understand; tell me your plan," said the man, an evil look creeping into his eyes.

"You found the rifle near the White Cliffs—hidden in the fine straw, and—"

"Helen Brainard, you are a very devil for plotting! This evidence will be sufficient to hang him!"

"It may, and it may not; there must be more."

Frank nodded again.

"You are Frank Peters," continued the out-law.

"You are the brother of Ben Peters, the man I killed in the war. I don't blame you for wantin' to git even with me, but I mustn't allow it, you know. By rights I ought to chuck you over into the sink, but I don't want to do it. I have been sorry that I killed your brother, and I have been sorry to see you here, for the sake of killin' you. You have caught you, which ain't quite the same thing as it is, but—"

As Frank could interpose no plea to this indictment, he discreetly held his tongue.

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Frank was half-assertion, half a question, and there was a sneer in her tone.

"Yes; one dead, and one in prison and as well as doomed—this is why I came to beg you to let me have the right to comfort you in your sorrow."

"The world need not know; only give me the promise that you will become my wife. I told you I would return in one week, and, though I knew your sorrow was overwhelming, I have come."

The man pleaded earnestly, and his voice trembled.

After a silence of a moment, Helen said:

"I am glad you have come, for I would learn from you all about that cruel murder."

"From me! Why, did not your father tell you all?" asked Rosal, in surprise.

"He told me that Arthur Grenville had fallen by the hand of his brother; that was all I then cared to know. Now I will hear all from you."

"I will make known all that I can tell of the sad affair, Helen, in which, unfortunately, I was forced to take a too conspicuous part."

"You?" and the eyes turned earnestly upon his face.

"Indeed I do; it came so soon, so unexpected- edly upon you."

"You are without a rival now?"

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answer from himself. Can I take the liberty of asking him into your house, Mahon?"

"Certainly, my dear boy! Bring him in here, if you like, and let him join us—"

"Thanks, major!" interrupts Ryecroft. "But no. I'd prefer first having a word with him alone; instead of drinking, he may want fighting with me."

"Ho-ho!" ejaculates the major. "Murtaght to the servant, an old soldier of the 18th, 'show the gentleman into the drawing-room!'"

"Mr. Shenstone and I," proceeds Ryecroft in explanation, "have but the very slightest acquaintance. I've only met him a few times in general company; the last at a ball—a private one—just three nights ago. 'Twas that very morning I met the priest. I supposed we'd seen up there. 'Twould seem as if everybody on the Wye side had taken the fancy to follow me into France."

"Ha—ha—ha! About the *prétre*, no doubt you're mistaken. And maybe this isn't your man, either. The same name, you're sure?"

"Quite. The Herefordshire baronet's son is George, as his father, to whose title he is heir. I never heard of his having any other—"

"Stay! interrupts the major, again glancing at the card. "I'm trying to pick identification—an address—*Ormes頓 Hall*."

"Ah! I didn't observe that." In his agitation he had not, the address being in small script at the corner. "Ormes頓 Hall? Yes, I remember, Sir George's residence is so called. Of course it's the son—must be."

"But why do you think he means fight? Something happened between you, eh?"

"No; nothing between us, directly."

"Ah! Indirectly, then? Of course the old trouble—a woman."

"Well; if it be fighting the fellow's after, I suppose it must be about that," slowly rejoins Ryecroft, half in soliloquy and pondering over what took place on the night of the ball. Now vividly recalling that scene in the summer-house, in the angry words there spoken, he feels good as certain that the reflection that he to whom he lent his name had been born under a more propitious star than himself.

Still the little incident is not without effect. It restores his firmness, with the resolution to act as originally intended. This is still further strengthened, as Ryecroft enters the room, and he looks upon the man who has caused him so much misery. A man feared but not hated—

"Shenstone, I lay me down to sleep, Beneath a summer sky; Far off the shepherd watched his sheep, With ever-wakeful eye; A lullaby, soft, seemed to creep From out a womb close by.

The shepherd with his flute did thrill

The air with some sweet lay; The happy murmuring of a rill, A lark, and birds, and bee; My heart with a sweet rest did fill, Upon that summer's day.

I slept, and dreamed I wandered free.

Through dell and shady grove; Then you, an angel, came to me, And sung songs of above;

Then came a wild sweet melody, And then you sung of love.

Quick as the soul that upward springs, When it beats give it not birth;

Quick as the thought that action brings, I seized you, and I cut your wings, That you might stay on earth.

Then I awoke from my sweet sleep;

The rabbit fled to hide;

The sun into the sea did creep;

The wood was purple-dyed;

The shepherd gathered home his sheep,

No word spoke I, but as you gazed, With eyes that did surprise;

No word of welcome, and half-dazed,

I strove not even to rise,

And ere a foot or hand I raised,

You vanished from my eyes.

"I want to know—what you have done with Miss Wynn?"

He so challenged starts aback, turning pale. And looks with distrust at his challenger, while he repeats the words of the latter, with but the personal pronoun changed:

"What have I done with Miss Wynn?" Then adding, "Pray explain yourself, sir!"

"Come, Captain Ryecroft; you know what I allude to?"

"For the love of me I don't."

"Do you mean to say you're not aware of what's happened?"

"What's happened? When? Where?"

"At Llangollen, the night of that ball. You were present; I saw you."

"And I saw you, Mr. Shenstone. But you don't tell me what happened."

"Not at the ball, but after."

"Well, and what after?"

"Captain Ryecroft, you're either an innocent man, or, the most guilty on the face of the earth."

"Stop, sir! Language like yours requires justification of the gravest kind. I ask an explanation—demand it!"

Thus brought to bay, George Shenstone looks straight in the face of the man he has so savagely assailed; there to see neither consciousness of guilt, nor fear of punishment. Instead, honest surprise mingled with keen apprehension; the last not on his own account, but hers of whom they are speaking. Intuitively, as if whispered by an angel in his ear, he says, or thinks to himself: "This man knows nothing of Gwendoline Wynn. If she has been carried off, it has not been by him; if murdered, it is not her murderer."

"Captain Ryecroft," he at length cries out in hoarse voice, the revulsion of feeling almost choking him, "if I've been wronging you I ask forgiveness; and you'll forgive. For if I have, you do not—cannot know what has occurred."

"I've told you I don't," affirms Ryecroft, now certain that the other speaks of something different, and more serious than the affair he had himself been thinking of. "For Heaven's sake, Mr. Shenstone, explain! What has occurred?"

"Miss Wynn is gone away!"

"Miss Wynn gone away! But whither?"

"Nobody knows. All that can be said is, she disappeared on the night of the ball, without leaving any other trace left behind—except—"

"Except what?"

"A ring, a diamond cluster. I found it myself in the summer-house. You know the place—know you the ring, too?"

"I do, Mr. Shenstone; have reasons, painful ones. But I am not called upon to give them now, nor to you. What could it mean?" he adds, speaking to himself, thinking of that cry he heard when being rowed off. It connects itself with what he hears now; seems once more resounding in his ears, more than ever resounding a shriek! "But, sir; please proceed! For God's sake, keep nothing back—tell me everything!"

Thus appealed to, Shenstone answers by giving an account of what had occurred at Llangollen, and all that had transpired previous to his leaving, and frankly confesses his own reasons for being in Boulogne.

The manner in which it is received still further satisfying him of the other's guiltlessness, he again begs to be forgiven for the suspicions he had entertained.

"Mr. Shenstone," returns Ryecroft, "you ask what I am ready and willing to grant—God knows how ready, how willing. If any misfortune has befallen her we are speaking of, however great your grief, it cannot be greater than mine."

Shenstone is convinced. Ryecroft's speech, like his whole bearing, are those of a man not only guiltless, of wrong to Gwendoline Wynn, but one who, on her account, feels anxiety keen as his own.

He starts not to question further; but once more, making apologies for his intrusion—which are accepted without anger—he bows himself back into the street.

The business of his traveling companion in Boulogne was over some time ago. His is now equally ended; and though without having thrown any new light on the mystery of Miss Wynn's disappearance, still with some satisfaction to himself, he dares not dwell upon. Where is the man who would not rather know his sweetheart dead than see her in the arms of a rival? However ignoble the feeling, or base to entertain it, it is natural to the human heart tortured by jealousy. Too natural, as George Shenstone that night knows, with head tossing upon a sleepless pillow. Too late to catch the Folkestone packet, his bed is in Boulogne—no bed of roses but a couch Procrustean.

It is no thought of this, no craven fear which makes him pace Major Mahon's drawing-room floor so excitedly. His agitation is due to a different and nobler cause—the sensibility of a gentleman, with the dread of shame, should he find himself mistaken. But he has a consoling thought. Prompted by honor and affection, he

embarked in the affair, and still urged by them he will carry it to the conclusion *coute que coule*.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A GAGE D'AMOUR.

PACING to and fro, with stride jerky and irregular, Shenstone at length makes stop in front of the fireplace, not to warm himself—there is no fire in the grate—nor yet to survey his face before the mirror. His steps are arrested by something he sees resting upon the mantle-shelf; a sparkling object—in short a cigar-case of the beaded pattern.

Why should that attract the attention of the young Herefordshire squire, causing him to start, as it first catches his eye? In his lifetime he has seen scores of such, without caring to give them a second glance. But it is just because he has looked upon this one before, or fancies he has, that he now stands gazing at it, on the instant after reaching toward, and taking it up.

Ay, more than once has he seen that same cigar-case—he is now sure as he holds it in hand, turning it over and over—seen it before its embroidery was finished; watched fair fingers stretching the beads on, cunningly combining them in rows and figures—two hearts centred transfixed by a barbed and feathered shaft—all save the lettering he now looks upon, and which was never shown him. Many a time during the months past, he had hoped, and fondly imagined, the skillful contrivance and elaborate workmanship might be for himself. Now he knows better; the knowledge revealed to him by the initials V. R. entwined in monogram, and the words underneath "From Gwyn."

Three days ago, the discovery would have caused him a spasm of keenest pain. Not so now. After being shown to Gwendoline Wynn, known to Captain Ryecroft; no more wondering at the name of the man who had got back to England, nor doing enough to distract him. Instead, he counsels his immediate return; accompanies him to the first morning packet for Folkestone, and at the parting hand-shake again reminds him of that well-timed gripe in the ditch of God!

"God bless you, old boy! Whatever the upshot, remember you're a friend, and a bit of a tent to shelter you in Boulogne—not forgetting a little comfort from the *cryother*!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 446.)

Meanwhile, Captain Ryecroft returns to the room where his friend, the major, has been awaiting him. Impatiently, though not in the interim unemployed; as evinced by a flat mahogany box upon the table, and beside it a brace of dueling pistols, which have evidently been submitted to examination. They are the "best barters that can be got in Boulogne."

"We shan't need them, major, after all."

"The devil we shan't! He's shown the white feather."

"No, Mahon; instead, proved himself as brave a fellow as ever stood before sword-point, or dared pistol bullet."

"Then there's no trouble between you?"

"Ah! yes, trouble; but not between us. Sorry shared by both. We're in the same boat."

"In that case, why didn't you bring him in?"

"I didn't think of it."

"Well; we'll drink his health. And since you say you've both embarked in the same boat—a bad one—here's to your reaching a good haven, and in safety!"

"Thanks, major! The haven I now want to reach, and intend entering are another sun sets in the harbor of Folkestone."

The major almost drops his glass.

"I say, Ryecroft, you're surely joking!"

"No, Mahon, I'm in earnest—dead, anxious earnest."

"Well, I wonder! No, I don't," he adds, correcting himself. "A man needn't be surprised at anything where there's a woman concerned. May the devil take her, who's taking you away from me!"

"Major Mahon!"

"Well—well, old boy! Don't be angry. I meant nothing personal, knowing neither the lady, nor the reason for thus changing your mind, and so soon leaving me. Let my sorrow at that be my excuse."

"You shall be told it, this night—now!"

In another hour Major Mahon is in possession of all that relates to Gwendoline Wynn, known to Captain Ryecroft; no more wondering at the name of the man who had got back to England, nor doing enough to distract him. Instead, he counsels his immediate return; accompanies him to the first morning packet for Folkestone, and at the parting hand-shake again reminds him of that well-timed gripe in the ditch of God!

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(To be continued—commenced in No. 446.)

THE SLEEP VISITANT.

BY FREDERIC C. KURTZ.

I dreamt I lay me down to sleep, Beneath a summer sky; Far off the shepherd watched his sheep, With ever-wakeful eye; A lullaby, soft, seemed to creep From out a womb close by.

The shepherd with his flute did thrill

The air with some sweet lay;

The happy murmuring of a rill, A lark, and birds, and bee;

My heart with a sweet rest did fill, Upon that summer's day.

I slept, and dreamed I wandered free.

Through dell and shady grove;

Then you, an angel, came to me, And sung songs of above;

Then came a wild sweet melody, And then you sung of love.

Quick as the soul that upward springs, When it beats give it not birth;

Quick as the thought that action brings, I seized you, and I cut your wings, That you might stay on earth.

Then I awoke from my sweet sleep;

The rabbit fled to hide;

The sun into the sea did creep;

The wood was purple-dyed;

The shepherd gathered home his sheep,

No word spoke I, but as you gazed, With eyes that did surprise;

No word of welcome, and half-dazed,

I strove not even to rise,

And ere a foot or hand I raised,

You vanished from my eyes.

"I want to know—what you have done with Miss Wynn?"

He so challenged starts aback, turning pale. And looks with distrust at his challenger, while he repeats the words of the latter, with but the personal pronoun changed:

"What have I done with Miss Wynn?" Then adding, "Pray explain yourself, sir!"

"Come, Captain Ryecroft; you know what I allude to?"

"For the love of me I don't."

"Do you mean to say you're not aware of what's happened?"

"What's happened? When? Where?"

"At Llangollen, the night of that ball. You were present; I saw you."

"And I saw you, Mr. Shenstone. But you don't tell me what happened."

"Not at the ball, but after."

"Well, and what after?"

"Captain Ryecroft, you're either an innocent man, or, the most guilty on the face of the earth."

"Stop, sir! Language like yours requires justification of the gravest kind. I ask an explanation—demand it!"

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Sunshine Papers.

Keep Your Mouth Shut.

It is something that ninety-eight out of every hundred people need to learn—to keep their mouths shut. Not that such a percentage of the population of the world go through life with idiocy stamped upon their faces by continually opening their mouths, when they do open them, at the wrong time. If there is any fact they are sure to publish. If there is any one person to whom they ought not to repeat a certain remark, that is invariably the person to whom they do repeat it. If they hear some bit of scandal, or an ill-natured remark, which should come to an ignominious death with them, that is the first item of news they communicate to all their associates. If they are in a place where they should keep silent, they fail not to talk. If there is a time when they should restrain their tempers, they embrace that opportunity for giving them full play.

If only some people had known when to keep their mouths shut, and had been able to accomplish that most desirable feat, many a failure, many a quarrel, many a law-suit, many a severed marriage bond might have been averted; engagements might have terminated happily that are now remembered only with bitterness and tears; friendships now turned to deadly enmity might exist unbroken; reputations now tarnished might have remained unsullied. Indeed, two-thirds of the sad "might have been"—"saddest words of tongue or pen"—are the results of mouths opened when they should have been shut.

Strange that an art which, when once thoroughly acquired, is worth more than a gold mine to its possessor, should be familiar to so few!

Some people have yet to learn that during religious services, except when they are requested to sing, or expected to join in the responses, is one of the times when they should keep their mouths shut; others will do well to remember that the concert-room, the theater, the lecture-hall, are places where the mouth should be kept shut. It is an insult to performers, an annoyance to the audience, and a sign of ill-breeding, to converse in such place while actor, musician or speaker is entertaining the audience.

Again, when persons hear uncomplimentary criticisms of their acquaintances, instead of hastening to repeat the remarks the first time they encounter those acquaintances, they should resolutely keep their mouths shut; cherishing the unfavorable sayings—if they should remember them at all—for their own private delectation and saving their associates from mortification and wounded feelings. And when your friends by words or actions displease, annoy, wound or insult you, pass it with shut mouth.

When you hear one intimate friend abusing another, be it never so mildly, keep your mouth carefully shut that you may not make known the abuse to the person abused. When you are asked to praise something that you cannot admire, keep your mouth shut rather than give pain. Every one is not endowed with artistic taste, and oftentimes to tell just what you think about an article in which some one else is taking great delight would be to inflict a grievous wound. It is frequently far more important to keep one's mouth shut than to express one's personal opinions.

If men would keep their mouths shut when they feel tempted to say that they imagine Mr. Troubled's business is in rather a tight place, and they are rather suspicious of Mr. Queer's character, Mr. Troubled might tide over his vexations, and Mr. Queer gain an excellent situation, and the families of both live in peace and comfort. Many men have been ruined financially, morally, and spiritually, and their families with them, because other men, and women, too, could not keep their mouths shut at times when reticence, kindly association,

trusts shakes of the hand, and friendly smiles, might have led them onward and upward.

The moral taught by the tale of the three black crows will be a truism as long as this world exists. And learning to keep the mouth shut is the only remedy for the misery that results, daily, from the stories that have grown with the telling from "something black as a crow" to a veritable trio of those disgusting birds.

Keep your mouth shut—no matter how intimate a relationship you may sustain to the parties—whenever you feel like speaking to a wife concerning her husband, or to a husband concerning his wife. Ah! the scattered family circles the ruined homes, the sundered ties, the desolated hearts, that have resulted from the inability of friends and relatives to keep their mouths shut. And, wives, keep your mouths shut when husband is cross, or tantalizing, or goes astray—unless you can say something gentle and loving. Husband, keep your mouths shut when wife is peevish, or irritable, or domestic matters have gone awry, unless you can be tender, and cheerful, and patient. If one will not quarrel, two cannot!

There are some persons who talk so incessantly that they need to learn to keep their mouths shut some of the time; and some persons who talk so ignorantly, or so nonsensically, that the people they annoy would be grateful if such could acquire the art of keeping their mouths shut. Keep the mouth shut over slang, oaths, uncouth sarcasms, taunts, ill-natured retorts. And close the lips firmly when the repetition of a scandal would voice itself upon them. If you cannot say anything good of a person keep your mouth shut. If you can only say a little that is good, make that known, and then shut your mouth. Keep your mouth shut over gossip, and keep your mouth shut, above and beyond all, upon scandal. Believe every man one of subtlety until you know him dissipated, and even then keep your mouth shut concerning his failings, unless you can do himself or some one else good by cautious and private mention of them. Believe every person virtuous as long as possible, and when you are convinced to the contrary, do not aim to convince all the rest of the world concerning your discovery, but keep your mouth shut. Believe every one honest until convicted a thief, and then say as little about it as you can. You can do most good to the world, not by prying out and canvassing people's shortcomings, but by keeping your mouth shut. Let the workings of earthly and divine laws deal with the offenders.

Keep your mouth shut about every one else's business; and remember that he who applies the same rule to his own, is wise in his day and generation.

And are my readers deeming it about time to say, "Keep your mouth shut" to—

A PARSON'S DAUGHTER?
IMPROVIDENT PEOPLE.

A LITTLE bit of a while ago I received the following missive from some suffering individual, with whom "patience had ceased to be a virtue," and who came to me to pour "oil upon the troubled waters":

"If Eve Lawless is writing essays again, I do wish you would ask her to say something about that class of people who are forever teasing for garden-seeds—people who have the same chance to save the year from year that others have, yet—Big, yellow, bouncing cumbars, for instance, are not to be had for the asking, and the boys for toothalls, when the night just as easily be laid on the shelf for seed-time, and so save their owners from borrowing, or begging. I know a score of persons who might be scolded for negligence."

I have known individuals who thought it to be exceedingly "prim," and an "old maidish" action to pick up a pin and put it by in case of need, and yet are the very first to pest and plague one's life out for the little fastener. It is a very common exemplification of the fact that many people let others do the saving they should do themselves—let others slave for them, if you dare complain one bit, you are put off as one without feeling, kindness or Christianity.

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THE EVENING OF THE YEAR.

BY WILLIAM TENNYSON HEATON.

'Tis autumn time, and just below,
Those wreaths of thin blue smoke
From hamlet-house are rising slow,
And golden banners crown the oak.
In silence white the burial ground
In yon lone quiet valley lies,
And the spirits of the dead around
Where lettered-headstones rise.
The friends that trod those winding lanes
In the years forever dead
Are resting there where silence reigns—
While angels guard each bed.
Their faces though again I see
Through the years that lie between,
As the leaves now gather o'er the lea,
'Mid the graves and evergreen.
Childhood's friends the maiden fair,
Who loved me so well long ago,
Come back to me and claim the still air
Whisper echoes soft and low.
I hear a voice, a long-loved voice,
Speaking sweetly once again:
"Oh! weary heart, be calm! rejoice!"
We'll meet on heaven's fair plain!"

Maud's Ambition.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"KEITH LENNOX! Marry Keith Lennox—Ada, are you crazy?" I'd so soon think of cut-throat right arm as marrying Keith Lennox, or any other man who is not able to give me a better place to live in than this."

Maud Lawrence tossed her pretty golden-haired head, and looked all her indignant contempt at her sister Ada's mention of Keith Lennox's name.

"I am afraid you expect so much more than you will ever get, dear; that is all. We are poor, obscure people, Maud, and it would be very unreasonable if a Prince Charming should come along and select either of us for his consort. And besides, Keith is a good fellow, Maud, and earning a salary equal to papa's. If all of us can live on two hundred a year, and such terrible doctor's bills for mamma, I am sure two healthy, strong young people ought to live on the same sum very luxuriously and save money in the bargain."

Ada's tone was earnest and gentle, and Maud felt obliged to listen, although there was a little sardonic smile on her red lips.

"Twelve hundred a year! Ada, you don't seem to understand that I never, never will be satisfied unless I make a grand match. I ought to do it, Ada, for although as you say we are poor and obscure, I am worth it. I speak of my appearance as so much stock in trade. I have a fair education; you have often told me I had 'style' enough to wear the strawberry leaves; and I am positive I would enjoy the position of a wealthy man's wife, and by that I mean, a position that can command houses and lands, horses and carriages, servants in livery and powder, a villa at the sea-shore, one in the mountains, a—"

Ada interrupted her with a little exclamation of almost concern.

"Child, how you are running on! You surely know how worse than folly it is for you to build such impossible chateaux d'Espagne; why, Maud, a princess could hardly have more than you want!"

Maud laughed and flushed, looking ravishingly sweet and piquant with her blue eyes all aglow from the dimpling.

"Oh, but you interrupted me before I said all I want—and more to have, too! I know there are diamonds, and grand costumes and European tours waiting for me some time, somewhere, Maud, and when you deliberately advise me to marry Keith Lennox—! Well, the insanity of the idea is appalling."

Ada opened her sewing-machine with a little sigh.

"Notwithstanding everything, I suppose your blue organdie must be finished in time for the lawn party to-morrow. And poor Keith will be there."

An impatient frown puckered up Maud's fair forehead.

"And what if he is? So will Mr. Holland, and Jennie Gatzmer's good-looking brother, and Phil Barry—and oh, dozens of young men. Only I don't know why you need say 'poor Keith'; he has twelve hundred a year, you know."

His blue eyes sparkled saucily, but Ada, windily dimpled did not see it, and answered gravely enough.

"I was not speaking of him financially. I am sorry for him, because he worships you, and you intend to throw him over."

Maud laughed deliciously—music that of itself was a rare charm.

"Why don't you take him, Ada? You two suit each other remarkably well—and leave me to arrange my own affairs. Ada— and the sweet voice suddenly dropped its gay, bantering tone, and was so seriously grave and resolute that Ada looked instantly up—"Ada, if Mr. Pemberton asks me, I shall accept him!"

"Mr. Pemberton! Mr. Pemberton! Maud, my darling, don't say such a horrible thing again, even in jest! You sicken me, you frightened me—that wicked old man—oh, Maud, surely you are only teasing me!"

For there was a resoluteness on Maud's grave face that emphasized her slow, deliberate words. "Is he a wicked old man? Oh, of course he is not young—as—Keith Lennox—but you will not say that he is! I'm awfully rich! 'Papazza king' they call him, don't they? Papa says he's worth at least five million dollars."

The blue eyes were flashing and glowing on Ada's horrified face.

"Maud! What a matter a thousand million if you must have it at such a—such a horrible sacrifice! He is so vulgar, so—so loud—so flashy, so old—why, his youngest child is nearly as old as you, Maud, and his wife hasn't been dead a year yet!"

Maud laughed again—that silvery little melody that had made Rufus Pemberton once boast before a bar-room full of admiring, envious comrades, that "if money could buy that laugh and the girl who run it, he'd be the purchaser." "Well, there—there—Ada, don't let's talk about it. Put the Torchon lace on those ruffles, dear, and it'll look sweet! I do hope to morrow we'll be fair day, don't you?"

Then she went off to her room on some pretext or other, and Ada sat and sewed and grieved, and tried to hope that after all Maud would never let her mercenary ambition ruin her happiness.

Mr. Rufus Pemberton sat in his magnificent library that snowy, blustering morning, a look of perplexed amazement on his coarse face as he read over and over again a letter he had just finished writing, in the construction of which he had wasted an hour, possibly, and which yet seemed unsatisfactory.

And the letter was to Maud Lawrence, to whom he had been engaged to be married since the day of the famous picnic, several months before, when Maud had been so ravishingly beautiful in her pale-blue organdie, with her golden curls flying, her pink cheeks flushing and dimpling, her exquisite laugh ringing silverly.

The letter was to Maud Lawrence, who had been living in a seventh heaven of feverish delight and exultation that her wildest dreams were to be realized—until these last few weeks when it seemed as if Fate herself was bound to lower her for the outrage Maud was so deliberately perpetrating on her own heart and finer nature.

For terrible misfortune had come to Maud Lawrence; terrible sickness that had spent all its power of fury on her, wrecking her for life, wasting her wonderful beauty, and dooming her to speak in hoarse, whispering tones; then, as if her evil genius could not be sufficiently appeased by such pitiful sacrifices, her disease settled in her hip and Maud was lame for life!

It was when she was recovering her physical

strength—maimed and marred for all time though she was—that Rufus Pemberton made up his coarse sensual mind to get off his bargain with the girl whose beauty and grace he had thought a good exchange for his money. And the letter that bothered him was the letter to the girl he had asked to marry him, telling her, in plain clumsy terms, that he no longer wanted her.

And it went into Maud's cheerful little invalid bedroom, where there was sunshine, and where there were flowers and a bird and a kitten, and new novels, and a bit of gay zephyr work—it went into the brightness and comfort, like a cruel sword thrust into quivering flesh, bursting and stinging Maud's sensitive pride, and making her desperate in her shame and rage, and making Ada send up praises of thanksgiving even when she counted the price.

After that came the darkest days Maud Lawrence had ever known. More sickness and trouble followed, and death came and left the two who alone had entered unprovided for. They were obliged to go away from the small home that had never before had seemed so pleasant to poor Maud; and the actual from day-to-day fight with the world began; and Maud in her helplessness and misery had to sit by and let brave-hearted, cheery-souled Ada eat the bread and cheese for them to eat.

It was during those days that the discipline of adversity worked its effect on Maud's subdued spirit, and she saw what a grand man Keith Lennox was—Keith Lennox who had stood by them in all their circumstances, who had been Ada's counselor, comforter, friend; and who, Maud saw with a bitterness of pain she never dreamed could come to her through Keith Lennox—she saw would one day be still nearer and nearer.

For Ada's eyes would brighten when he came, invariably asking for her; and when, through the day Maud would speak of him, Ada would flush and look conscious, and then Maud would feel the bitter pain, and tell herself her better sense and better self had been awakened only in time to discover it was too late to be of avail.

It all culminated one day, when Ada went into the quiet little room where Maud sat trying to eke out their close income, making some lace trimming for the stores.

"I want to have a little talk with you, dear, about our affairs. I suppose we—I mean Keith and I—might have waited a little longer before we told you, but Keith asked me to tell you today, and so, dear, put down your work and listen."

Poor Maud! A look at Ada's sweet, peacefully happy face told her what was to be said, and although it was worse pain than any one could have told, Maud hushed the sorrowful sobs that were stirring in her heart before they reached her poor, quivering lips. Ada gently caressed the little white hand that lay next to the dainty hand with which she talked.

"You see, dear, Keith thought it best that we should do nothing until everything was arranged, but now—he has got the little cottage he wanted—oh, such a darling nest of a house, and, Maud, it is all furnished so beautifully, and this afternoon he is to come for us in a carriage and take us out to see it. Maud, you don't begin to know what a splendid fellow Keith is!"

Maud snuffed a pitiful, patient little ghost of a smile.

"I know he is, Ada, a dear, good fellow."

"And there couldn't be a better for a brother-in-law, Maud!"

Ah! It was a delicate, roundabout way to tell it, but all the same, there went a pain like a dagger through Maud's heart. A brother-in-law! Well—yes, that was what he would be to her—she, who had once thrown him contemptuously aside for a man who had—it sickened her as she thought of it all, and compared the two, and realized her loss—the name, the voice! Now—she realized it was a gentle patient face that smiled at Keith Lennox, as he stood in the little rose-bowered piazza waiting for them; very pure, lovely eyes that time or sickness never would dim, but that trouble had made more beautiful and soulful than ever that looked up in his eager, grandly tender face as he lifted her from the carriage.

"Welcome! Come in, and make yourselves at home, because—you have told her, haven't you, Ada, that we are here for good? You told her the marriage is to take place here, this afternoon?"

Another of those agony thrills shot through her, then she smiled bravely at Keith and Ada.

"How delicious! Only, Ada's not dressed enough like a bride."

She said it, scarcely knowing what she said. Then, Ada's arms were around her neck, and Keith was holding her two hands in his, and looking down in his astonished eyes.

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"Please do not speak to me, Count Cicarini," she said to him, holding out her white arms as if to keep him away. "Yes, stay! I have one request to make of you. It is—that you do not seek to punish Alberto for the crimes he did against you. He is—my husband—now."

The words dropped like icicles from her pallid lips. The count bowed low as he answered:

"For your sake, madame—for the sake of the pleasant past—I consent not to lay a strain in Alberto's way. May your life with him be happy and prosperous; I shall not disturb it."

His beautiful lips curled with scorn of a woman who could debase herself to live with that scoundrel. Kitty saw the contempt, but her lips were sealed—she could only look after him with a dilating gaze of love, horror, shame, longing, desperation: Alberto was at her elbow, his fierce eyes watching her with malignant cunning, and she had to allow the count to bow, and then to go.

"It is my money he wanted—not me! Avarice was his strongest trait; he had it by birth, and as well as by choice. Tell me, if I were alone in the world, what would become of me?"

"I am not the only one who would despise me for having been called his wife. Yet, I was not a coward. I did the best I could. When I think of how utterly helpless I was, in the power of my tormentor, alone on the ocean with him, legally his wife, I wonder that I was able to make terms with him! He feared that I would kill myself—he saw that I had the resolution to do it—and thus he would lose the rich plunders his avarice courted, so he entered into bonds with me. Ay, I hold him to his terms! But Carlo despises me. Alberto dares to sneer at my 'hopeless love'—to taunt me with my love for the count! I shall lose my reason, some day. How horribly have I been punished for that waywardness which I thought so brave!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SUN SHINES THROUGH A CLOUD.

Do I hear her sing as of old,
My love, my love, my love,
My dove with the tender eye?
But there rings on a sudden a powerful cry—
There is some one dying or dead—

WHEN Philip Armory sent up his card from one of the parlors of the Everett House, the morning following his visit to the opera, to Madame Franca, only the dark-faced servant came down to him.

"Madame cannot see you this morning Mr. Armory. She is in—affliction. There has been—sudden illness—and death. Monsieur Franca—is dead. He died—of pneumonia, about—an hour ago. Madame begs you will call again this evening—and—request you that do not speak to her—any to one."

Philip said "yes" and he said it with a sigh.

"Am I not? Yes, I would rather fight Indians than be again on that vessel, a prisoner as I was. Yes, I am a chip of the old block, Mr. Armory—you know my great-grandmother fought in the Revolution in boy's clothes. That would be lots more fun than the kind of mental warfare I had to carry on."

True this was Kitty Kanell, sitting on the sofa, talking to him. Philip felt the old spell of her pleasant, sturdy, smiling eyes. There were none like her—none like her—none like her—

"Thank God, you are safe!" fervently.

"I do thank God," answered Philip, with sudden, sweet solemnity. "Do not think me heartless, Mr. Armory, because I can be almost gay in the presence of sudden death. If you could only imagine half what I have suffered!" with a shudder.

"Why! only last evening, when I saw you in the parquette looking at me with those reproachful eyes, I was the most miserable girl on the face of the earth. If Alberto had lived, I should have kept the secret of my life with him, for he had my promise. My only hope, yesterday, was that he would squander my fortune quickly, and then, when he had gotten the last dollar, let me go. Now, to-day, I am free! I am Kitty Kanell again! My heart sings in my breast. I cannot help it. I shall be as young as my father—I shall see Lilia and Florian—I shall go wild with joy! You will tell papa all about it to-night; to-morrow he will come for me!"

Philip said "yes" but he said it with a sigh. He had no part in this joy of Kitty's; he was only a convenience to her; she had sent for him because he was the first acquaintance who presented himself on her return.

"Go now, Mr. Armory," cried Kitty, with sudden, sweet solemnity. "Fly! tell papa all. He will be glad to hear of it. I shall be up and waiting. I shall be *auspiciously* grateful to you. Where do you live now? How is your dear, kind mother?"

"She is your father's housekeeper. You will see her in the morning."

She did not notice the bitterness in the poor old maid's tone.

"I am glad! How nice it is for my father to have such a lady in place of Miss Parseley. Kiss your dear mother for me, Mr. Armory. And now, please go. I shall imagine the scene, while you are telling papa. It will take you an hour to reach him—it is half-past eight now—

—at half-past nine you will stand in his august presence and say: 'Kitty wants to come home! Kitty is waiting for her papa to come for her!'"

She burst into a silvery laugh of pure joy. The echo of that laugh crept into the adjoining room where Alberto lay still under a white pall—he could not rouse himself and put down that laugh with a cruel look out of his wicked eyes.

Poor girl! He had made her suffer agonies prolonged. It was but retribution that she should laugh that he was dead.

from the windows. The building had caught fire from the iron brand which the woman had cast recklessly aside upon the announcement of her arrest.

Agreeably to hints which Beppo, captain of the spires, had received from the Grand Inquisitor, that grim personage called next morning at the mansion of Manuel de Herrera.

On the outside he was met by one of his zealous spies who had been near the mansion since shortly after midnight.

Enriquez had discovered this spy, and, as has been shown, suspecting the connivance of the Inquisition, he was providentially enabled to warn Marie and prevent her stepping into a net which, it was believed, was intended for both father and daughter.

Cuerpo de Toledo, mentioned as sitting at the right hand of the Grand Inquisitor, in the pavilion, had been a suitor for Manuel de Herrera's lovely child. Being notorious for a dissipated character and brutal temper, it was no wonder that Marie shrank from his acquaintance with repugnance. Far from relinquishing his designs upon the pure girl—and stimulated by an intense hate for his successful rival, Huo St. Liege—Cuerpo had induced the Grand Inquisitor to join in a league to destroy the old countess and to waylay her beloved covetous child.

As the spy approached, Beppo accosted him.

"Well, what have you now?"

"There has been a murder done."

"Hah! A murder, say you?"

"Step this way." And the spy led him to the rear, showing the dead man on the sword and the rope-ladder dangling from the balcony.

"Oh! How long do you suppose this has been laying here?" indicating the body.

"I found it when I first came." "Give it burial while I make inquiries about it." With this order, Beppo proceeded to climb the ladder.

Reaching the room above, he discovered Manuel de Herrera lying, prone upon his face, and grasping rigidly in one hand a piece of parchment.

Beppo took the parchment from the clenched fist and read it. It was the warning that Enriquez had cast in the night gone. Then he placed his fingers on the wrist of the prostrate man.

"Dead!" he mumbled. "His daughter has been stolen; the shock was too great."

The spy was away below with the corpse when

"Finish your task," he said, striding hurriedly away. "I have important news to communicate to his eminence."

Manuel de Herrera had escaped the summons of the Inquisition. His wealth of money and property, however, did not escape.

After a rigorous but fruitless search for Marie—of which none were more ardent than Cuerpo de Toledo—the Inquisition appropriated everything belonging to the old man. The Governor of Seville issued a proclamation offering Marie de Herrera ten days in which to present herself and receive that portion of his father's estate not considered subject as tribute to the rulers of Seville. This Governor was acting under private instructions meant to lure Marie into the power of her enemies. But the object of the proclamation was frustrated.

Safe in the home of Enriquez, whose mother and sister lovingly condoled with her, Marie was kept informed of all that transpired outside. She heard the story of the confiscation calmly, seeming to forget it in the balance with other woes.

On two occasions her enemy had passed the house; once, happening to glance up at the windows, Marie, who was standing there pale and frozen at sight of him, was only saved from recognition by the quick wit of Enriquez's mother, who threw her arms around the neck of her charge and bent to kiss her, thus screening her face.

Enriquez was absent continuously during the days of Marie's hiding. When he joined them after the mid-night, his brow was gloomy and thoughtful.

Marie observed the shadow that had settled upon him—noticed that he grew more morose each day. At last, being an unintentional listener to some words addressed by her protector to his mother, the truth flashed upon her, and she burst in upon them, crying, distressedly:

"Oh, Enriquez! I know the secret, now, of your strange moods. Tell me: where is Huo?—that you are so anxious about him."

It had to be told. Concealment was no longer possible. A few syllables conveyed the sad intelligence of Huo's confinement; and thus blow after blow fell upon her, as if, indeed, Heaven itself had at last deserted her.

Upon a certain evening, the fourth day following that proclamation which was intended to entrap her—a new spirit seemed to possess the maiden. Her white cheeks changed to a fevered flush, and a sparkle as of old came back to the lustrous eyes. Her poise was firm, her step elastic, and a hard compression of the lips indicated that some great purpose was born within her.

"Well, Mandamiento, what is your business?"

"For once," replied the Master, in a tone of ludicrous sorrow, "the brothers of the Garduna are unhappy."

"And what have I to do with it?"

"We have done many deeds for your eminence—receiving our pay with a clear conscience. I am come to ask a favor."

"Name it."

"Three weeks ago we received a sum of money to extinguish a certain man. The money was paid in good faith, and we promised to perform our task. But it has pleased the Inquisition to seize upon the one whose life, of right, belongs to us. We are, therefore, traitors to our promise."

"Who is this man?"

"Huo St. Liege."

"Ha!" As the Grand Inquisitor uttered the exclamation he took half a dozen quick strides across the alcove.

Mandamiento watched him with mournful eyes.

"Look you: if I turn this man over to you, what becomes of him?"

"He will be extinguished forthwith."

"Are you sure?"

"Be it so. You shall have Huo St. Liege."

"Ah, but you remove a load from my breast."

To-night, when the lamps are out, there will be a coach near the cathedral on square L'Espalade. If he can be got into it he will not see the sun rise on Seville."

"Rely upon it, he will be there. But, stay; who was it that paid you to remove this young man?"

Cuerpo de Toledo.

"What will do. You have my promise. Now, go."

Mandamiento strutted away with comical dignity. As he departed a spy entered with the announcement:

"My lord, the courier was seen to leave the palace, riding furiously, and was completely lost sight of."

"Boppo—it was that personage!" the courier was no other than Marie de Herrera. Could you not penetrate the disguise?"

"Nay—I never dreamt it."

"Where is Cuerpo de Toledo?"

"In his cups: or, as the vulgar say, 'quite drunk.'"

"Send out your best spies. Marie de Herrera is in Seville. If you fail to find her, I shall deem you and your officers a pack of asses. Go."

The Grand Inquisitor seated himself to address the following to Charles V.:

"PALACE OF THE INQUISITION, SEVILLE, May—, 1534."

"It is regretted that your messenger did not arrive sooner. Huo St. Liege was honorably acquitted; we understand he fell into the hands of the Garduna—of whose atrocities you may have heard—and has disappeared entirely. It would have been our pleasure to give the unfortunate young man a conduct from Seville."

"To Charles, King of Spain."

His prospects were dismal enough. That his body was to be sacrificed he had no doubt. The approach of death alone did not alarm him; he was prepared, he believed, to meet his Maker and Judge. But, to be cut off in the prime of manhood, when so much of happiness promised; to realize that Marie, unprotected, must soon fall a prey to ruthless villainy—this was the keen bitterness that lurked in his unfortunate fate.

The ten days had elapsed. The Governor reported his failure to the Grand Inquisitor, who, enraged at being baffled, set about a sys tem of spies that had his prey being hidden in a kennel, she would have been unearthened.

Fortunately for Marie, she was then far from

Seville; and had it not been that the duty of her mission compelled a return, her disappearance might have forever remained a mystery.

The trial (it came. A day as sultry in aspect as the tribunal before which the cavalier was to be tried).

St. Liege, guarded on either side by armed spires, was conducted into the hall. The Grand Inquisitor was seated in his presidential chair, with a face as stern as he might without betraying his natural malignance.

Several were there, being tried by turns—and condemned.

Huo was led forward to the semicircular table, where he was left standing before a volume of the Gospel and a sable crucifix.

There was an audience of monks and noblemen; the young man was well known, and in store for him, though his words bore enough to evince sympathy for the declared culprit.

"Huo St. Liege, swear to speak the truth."

"I swear."

"You are accused," continued the inquisitor, "of having failed to denounce Manuel de Herera, and of encouraging Marie, his child, in her sacrilegious doctrines."

"My lord, as to the first, I pronounce it a lie!"

"As to the last, I pronounce it a lie!"

The Grand Inquisitor started as if stung. A minute passed among the audience. Never had Huo given such a look of defiance.

"He denies it"—modifying to the inquisitor.

"Finish this mockery briefly!" exclaimed Huo. "I know that my death is decided upon; why waste time in such blasphemous mummery?"

Here a scribe announced:

"Your eminence, a courier from the king, on business relating to Huo St. Liege."

"Admit him," complacently.

The courier, whose sudden arrival gave new interest to Huo's case, was ushered in. A slight, even glib-tempered man. He wore a gay jacket and leggings, and, short of stature, was over-topped by the pure brow. Skin like the brown olive, eyes of hazel, lips uncommon rich for a boy, and shape of faultless symmetry. Kneeling, and doffing his velvet cap till the gaudy plume struck the floor, he waited to be addressed.

"Rise," said his eminence, regarding the youth with a look of strange perplexity.

"We are always honored by receipt of any communication from King Charles. What is the nature of the mission?"

The courier made a sign, indicating that he was a messenger, and showed a letter from Charles V. bearing the royal seal.

"As I live!" thought the Inquisitor. "I have penetrated the disguise of this masquerading courier. Not all the dyes and turpines in Spain can hide from my eyes the loveliness of Marie de Herrera! She has been to the king in behalf of her lover. We shall soon know."

Breaking the royal seal, he began reading the missive of vellum. The eyes of the Grand Inquisitor had been sharper than those of the lover.

This was the substance of the royal communication:

"PALACE OF MADRID, May—, 1534."

"To His Eminence the Grand Inquisitor—Greeting."

"Huo St. Liege, descendant of a worthy count, and son of Captain and whose line under Philip II. were most loyal subjects to both crown and church."

"As it is believed that the young man is of special service to us, and not an enemy, it is our earnest desire that he be acquitted by the tribunal of which you are eminence."

"Charles."

This was a brief epistle. It required great ingenuity to interfere with the Inquisition. King Charles entertained a particular fondness for the powerful institution which, he well knew, at that time held the whole domain under its iron heel. But history tells that he was a man of genius and intrepidity, and once his sympathies had been aroused, he would dare dangerous things in a worthy cause, placing both person and throne in peril.

The Grand Inquisitor read the letter with evident displeasure. When he looked up the courier had vanished. Hastily summoning a scribe he wrote a short despatch:

"Watch every step. Set guards everywhere. That messenger must not escape from the palace. When he is caught, advise me."

"My lord! The courier of the king—"

"At last! At last! Huo!—my beloved!"

His senses reeled. Then he stretched forth his free arms and drew the precious form to his breast.

"Marie! I dream!" he exclaimed, brokenly.

"And did not you aid, also?" reminded a fourth—Yva.

The letter from Charles V. was but part of the narrative of the following day.

Satisfied that the Grand Inquisitor was resolved upon the destruction of Huo St. Liege, and would readily avail himself of an opportunity to thwart the good purpose of the monarch, Mandamiento had been easily bribed to utter the falsehood which persuaded his eminence to give Huo to the supposed vengeance of the Garduna.

Huo and Marie, accompanied by Enriquez and Yva, fled to Germany. Both pair, all warmly attached, were duly wedded.

Corinne Bonville, the Frenchwoman, perished in the dungeons of the Inquisition under undergoing extreme and most horrid tortures.

Having sealed and dispatched this by special courier, he sunk back in his chair, laughing:

"There! Let us measure weapons, King Charles! Ha! ha! ha!"

Late that same evening the Grand Inquisitor walked in the palace gardens, soothing away his sorrows of the day beneath the bathing moonlight and balmy odor of flowers. A favorite Dominican usually accompanied him in these nightly walks, but on this occasion he was too late!

"Cuerpo de Toledo, explain yourself!" demanded the Inquisitor, sharply.

"You have given Huo St. Liege his liberty!"

"I'm in blank amazement."

"You are accused," continued the inquisitor, "of having failed to denounce Manuel de Herera, and of encouraging Marie, his child, in her sacrilegious doctrines."

"My lord, as to the first, I pronounce it a lie!"

"As to the last, I pronounce it a lie!"

The Grand Inquisitor started as if stung. A minute passed among the audience. Never had Huo given such a look of defiance.

"He denies it"—modifying to the inquisitor.

"Finish this mockery briefly!" exclaimed Huo. "I know that my death is decided upon; why waste time in such blasphemous mummery?"

Here a scribe announced:

"Your eminence, a courier from the king, on business relating to Huo St. Liege."

"Admit him," complacently.

The courier, whose sudden arrival gave new interest to Huo's case, was ushered in. A slight, even glib-tempered man. He wore a gay jacket and leggings, and, short of stature, was over-topped by the pure brow. Skin like the brown olive, eyes of hazel, lips uncommon rich for a boy, and shape of faultless symmetry. Kneeling, and doffing his velvet cap till the gaudy plume struck the floor, he waited to be addressed.

"Rise," said his eminence, regarding the youth with a look of strange perplexity.

"We are always honored by receipt of any communication from King Charles. What is the nature of the mission?"

The courier made a sign, indicating that he was a messenger, and showed a letter from Charles V. bearing the royal seal.

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The courier

whole family had been murdered. Those whom I questioned could tell me nothing of my son Kirke, nor could I find the family with whom he had been visiting.

"Then I gave my life over to one object; that of revenge. It would be too long were I to tell you how I intended to strike the right trail. Enough that I did, at last, and that I marked out every man of the midnight assassins for death. I was greatly aided by my one friend—Double Dan."

"That's me an' my twin brother!" came the queer double voice of the scout, as he entered the glade, followed by three other persons.

"You here! where did you leave your prisoner?"

"Safe an' sound—tied up like a pig in a pack!" grinned Double Dan. "I done fetched some folks to see ye. Miss Missouri Belle, Mister Mark Bird, an' Kirke Howard, esquire—me known to Double Sight the Death Shot, or Judge."

"Stop, friend," interposed the Death Shot, "Let me finish my explanation, first. I will be as brief as possible. I made use of many disguises in my work, and being a fair ventriloquist, I added to my mysterious ways. I managed to get me a very respectable mask. I procured me a very fine air-pistol, of long range, but small bore, and it aided me a little. The wounds made by its balls were so small that only a close investigation could discern what had dealt the fatal blow. I only used this when I wished to entirely escape observation."

"Not until last year did I suspect that I had a daughter living. Some words that Colonel Overton dropped gave me the clew. Until quite recently I believed that the young lady known as Missouri Belle was my child; and Equality Eph believed it to his death. But in this he was deceived by his fellow criminal, Overton. He it was who stoled your child and burned your house, Mr. Marvin. He brought your child to Kirke, and then gave her to Mr. and Mrs. Lamb."

"And now it's my turn," interposed Mistress Nancy. "You shot up, Hector Lamb! I'm goin' to tell everythin' I know. These folks'll know how to make lawances for people what was starvin' to death."

And Nancy did tell. How Overton bribed them to keep Mr. Marvin's child and raise it as her own. How they wandered to Texas. Then came a hard time. They were literally starving. Too proud to beg, one dark night they salied out to their nearest neighbor's, and using an ax, Hector Lamb killed two fattening hogs. They were caught at this work by Overton and another man, and they fled, leaving their ax behind them.

That same night the Howard ranch was burned. And just before dawn Overton came to them bearing a little girl, which he wished them to keep, for the child's sake. They demurred, but he threatened them with execrable as hog-thieves. They begged for time, for they had learned to love the child dearly. That same morning the report spread that the neighbor whom they had attempted to rob, was found dead in his bed, slain by the stroke of an ax. And Overton threatened to swear the crime upon them unless they agreed to perform his will in every particular. Though this murder was almost lost sight of in the wild excitement which followed the Howard tragedy, the Lambs knew that it would require but a word to set the mob upon them.

"We couldn't do nothin'. He had the ax we used to kill the hogs with. He said he'd swar we see us comin' out o' the man's house, in the night. So we could only give way to his will."

He told them that a few days a man would call for the child, an' tell 'em where we might know he was the right one. Overton he did come, we might keep the young 'un mighty close, so nobody'd ever see it. He made us change that clothes, an' swar to pass off our real Minnie for fother, an' the man who axed for it. We did just as he said. A week afterwards, the man come. He give us the sign that showed he was the right person. An' when he went away, he took the child with him."

The Death Shot quietly led the two maidens forward, and spoke to Nancy Lamb.

"Are these the two children you have spoken of?"

"I kin swar to this one," said the woman, drawing Minnie to her side. "She is the one I Overton brung last; the one I most kin swar is the daughter of Isaac Howard. As fer fother, or she is the baby I tended better for two years, she's got a bad scar on her right arm, above the elbow."

With a wondering cry, Missouri Belle pushed up her sleeve. Even in the gathering gloom the significant scar could be distinguished.

There was a sobbing cry—and Mrs. Marvin fell upon the neck of her long-lost daughter, while the trembling arms of the husband and father encircled them both.

Respecting their emotions, the remainder of the party withdrew to a little distance, when the Death Shot resumed his interrupted story.

There is no particular necessity for us to follow his explanations step by step. A word or two concerning those points which have been more particularly brought before the reader must suffice.

From the hour in which his suspicions were aroused that his daughter lived, Isaac Howard never lost sight of his prey. Day and night he dogged them, unable to rest until he learned the truth. He it was that rescued Equality Eph, when that scoundrel was precipitated upon the bull's back in the circus ring, because he would not that his enemy should die with his secret untold. He it was that dogged the spy to the outlaws' quarters that same night, and cut short his report with a shot from his air-pistol through the barred window. He also shot the faro dealer, and James Brown, the convicted traitor. These three men were of those who had murdered his family, years before.

He visited Equality Eph at Black Swamp, intending to play the role of Colonel Overton, but the Wolf, suddenly aroused from a troubled sleep, and with a look of alarm, saw his own life. How he did obliquely strike him down. As he fled for safety, he grabbed Missouri Belle, not knowing who she was, at the time.

As the reader knows, Overton, believing his shot fatal, plunged into the water to rescue the girl. Instead, he was grappled by both Double Dan and Howard. In the struggle that ensued, Overton was stabbed and choked senseless. A single word set Double Dan to work; and while Howard rescued Missouri Belle, his friend was dragging Overton through the swamp to where the trusty black horse was tethered.

How boldly the Death Shot played his assumed part, how completely he averted all suspicion, have been shown. From what Double Dan had heard when spying upon the real Overton, added to the notes in the captured memorandum-book, it was easy for the Death Shot to deceive the Old-Father Wolf!

Double Dan, while hiding with his prisoner in the swamp, overheard the stormy scene between Missouri Belle and the cousins, and watching his chance, made himself known to them, and told them a portion of what was in the wind. As a natural result, it was decided that they should proceed to the Buffalo Hump.

With a few brief remarks, our story proper is ended. The maiden whom we have known thus far as Minnie Lamb was recognized as the daughter of Isaac Howard, and the sister of Kirke. That she was half smothered with carelessness may readily be imagined. Nor was Mark Bird at all backward in claiming his share, as a cousin. Dashing Ned added his congratulations, but Minnie noted, with a sharp pang, that he was far more deeply interested in her whom he have known as Missouri Belle. The warm glow in his fine eyes, betrayed by the crackling camp-fire, she could not mistake.

The situation was a peculiar one. Minnie loved Dashing Ned; he loved Missouri Belle, as did Kirke Howard, also; Missouri Belle loved Mark Bird, while he had eyes only for his cousin Minnie.

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disguises in my work, and being a fair ventriloquist, I added to my mysterious ways.

He peered forth from his refuge. Whirlwind and three stout braves stood with ready weapons, though in seeming carelessness, before him. The other braves are bringing dried sticks and grass and piling them upon the log. He hears the clicking of flint and steel, and the sound sends a sickening thrill through his heart. Those sounds are to him what fastening down the coffin-lid must be to one lying in a death-trance, ready for the grave.

He knows when the sparks catch upon the tinder. He can tell when these are blown into a

flame—and he hears the faint crackling as the serpent-tongued flames lick up the dry grass, winding in and out through the only too readily ignited fagots.

And now the dusky fiends raise their wild voices in the triumphant scalp-song, and as the bright flames shoot higher and higher, the doomed victim hears them dancing before his prison in mad glee.

From that moment his nerves become steely. He knows that death is inevitable, but he will not die without a struggle.

"They'll have to kill me, but that they killed my brother" go under, there will be more than one mourning household in Texas.

The flames leap higher. The heat grows more intense. The log is one blazing mass of coal. The suffocating heat fills the hollow. It scroches the sullen wretch. His face and scalp are one great blister. His blood seems boiling in his veins. Wild visions of the black past arise before him. He is assailed by a thousand weird phantoms. Devils are grapping with him. He fights—but in vain. They drag him forth from his blazing refuge—

A horrible yell bursts from his lips, and rendered insane by the frightful torture, he works his way out of the fiery circle. As he springs to his feet, his garments burst into flame. He is a man no longer.

The savage braves themselves in a semicircle, of which the edge of the chasm forms the chord. As the blazing, maddened half-breath rushed forward, he is met and turned back by the rifle-barrels and lance-butts of the wildly exulting savages. Time and again is he thus repulsed.

Then—for one brief instant his brain seems to fail him.

He totters—sinks down upon his knees. He catches upon his breast. Inch by inch he sinks down. He fights in desperate silence for his life.

The gates of the city were not closed until nine.

The Chief Justice, whose abode was quite near to one of the gates, was assaulted as he left his house shortly after eight in the evening to go to the palace, plodded violently from the midst of his escort, who fled in terror. The naked blades of the fierce moss-troopers, wrapped in a cloak and carried in haste through the city gates before the astonished warden could discover what was the matter.

Pursuit of course was given at once, but the desperate band had far too much start and easily gained their wild fastness with their prey.

Safe in the border-land, the wife of Johnnie Armstrong made known her conditions.

"Prisoner for prisoner!" she declared.

The regent, outraged, swore that he would have the moss-trooper without delay, but the lady swore fully to stand by him if he did the Lord Chief Justice should swing.

And the regent dared not fulfil his threat, for he feared

